



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

Notice of Determination Pursuant to Section 301: Turkey's Digital Services Tax

AGENCY: Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Trade Representative has determined that Turkey's Digital Services Tax (DST) is unreasonable or discriminatory and burdens or restricts U.S. commerce and thus is actionable under Section 301.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For questions concerning the investigation, please contact Thomas Au or Patrick Childress, Assistant General Counsels at (202) 395-0380 and (202) 395-9531, respectively, Robert Tanner, Director, Services and Investment at (202) 395-6125, or Michael Rogers, Director, Europe and the Middle East at (202) 395-2684.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Turkey's DST

Based on information obtained during the investigation, USTR has prepared a comprehensive report on Turkey's DST (Turkey DST Report). The Turkey Report, which is posted on the USTR website at <https://ustr.gov/issue-areas/enforcement/section-301-investigations/section-301-digital-services-taxes>, includes a full description of Turkey's DST. To summarize, Turkey adopted the operative form of its DST on December 7, 2019. The DST applies to companies that, during the previous calendar year, generated €750 million or more in worldwide revenues and TRY 20 million or more in revenues deriving from the provision of digital services in Turkey. The tax applies as of March 1, 2020.

II. Proceedings in the Investigation

On June 2, 2020, the U.S. Trade Representative initiated an investigation of Turkey's DST pursuant to section 302(b)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (Trade Act). 85 FR 34709 (June 5, 2020) (notice of initiation). The notice of initiation solicited written comments on, *inter alia*, the following aspects of Turkey's DST: discrimination against U.S. companies and unreasonableness as tax policy. With respect to unreasonable tax policy, USTR solicited comments on, *inter alia*, whether the DST diverges from principles reflected in the U.S. and international tax systems, including extraterritorial application and taxing revenue rather than income.

Interested persons filed over 380 written submissions in response to the notice of initiation. The public submissions are available on www.regulations.gov in docket number USTR–2020–0022.

Under Section 303 of the Trade Act, the U.S. Trade Representative requested consultations with the Government of Turkey regarding the issues involved in the investigation. Consultations were held on September 29, 2020.

As noted, based on information obtained during the investigation, USTR has prepared and published the Turkey DST Report, which includes a comprehensive discussion on whether the acts, policies, and practices under investigation are actionable under Section 301(b) of the Trade Act. The Turkey DST Report supports findings that Turkey's DST is unreasonable or discriminatory and burdens or restricts U.S. commerce.

III. Determination on the Act, Policy, or Practice under Investigation

Based on the information obtained during the investigation, and taking account of public comments and the advice of the Section 301 Committee and advisory committees, the U.S. Trade Representative has made the following determination under sections 301(b) and 304(a) of the Trade Act (19 U.S.C. 2411(b) and 2414(a)): the act, policy, or practice covered in the investigation, namely Turkey's DST, is unreasonable or

discriminatory and burdens or restricts U.S. commerce, and thus is actionable under section 301(b) of the Trade Act. In particular:

1. Turkey's DST, by its structure and operation, discriminates against U.S. digital companies, including due to the selection of covered services and the revenue thresholds.
2. Turkey's DST is unreasonable because it is inconsistent with principles of international taxation, including due to its application to revenue rather than income, extraterritorial application, and failure to provide tax certainty.
3. Turkey's DST burdens or restricts U.S. commerce.

IV. Further Proceedings

Sections 301(b) and 304(a)(1)(B) of the Trade Act provides that if the U.S. Trade Representative determines that an act, policy, or practice of a foreign country is unreasonable or discriminatory and burdens or restricts United States commerce, the U.S. Trade Representative shall determine what action, if any, to take under Section 301(b). These matters will be addressed in subsequent proceedings under Section 301.

Joseph Barloon,
General Counsel,
Office of the United States Trade Representative.

[FR Doc. 2021-00364 Filed: 1/11/2021 8:45 am; Publication Date: 1/12/2021]